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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO RUEHHH/OPEC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS RIYADH 000029

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR E, S/CIEA GOLDWYN, EEB/ESC/IEC DAS HENGEL, NEA/ARP
DOE FOR PDAS JONATHAN ELKIND, DAS AL HEGBURG, AND GEORGE
PERSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EPET](#) [ENRG](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [FR](#) [IEF](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SAUDI OIL MINISTER REQUESTS U.S. VIEWS
ON ENERGY FORUM EXPERT GROUP PRIOR TO JANUARY 10 MEETING IN
PARIS

REF: A. HART-BAGWELL JANUARY 4 EMAILS/TELCON

- [1](#)B. 09 RIYADH 1642
- [1](#)C. 09 RIYADH 1557
- [1](#)D. 09 RIYADH 1450
- [1](#)E. 09 RIYADH 1407
- [1](#)F. 09 RIYADH 1397
- [1](#)G. 09 STATE 103636

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph five.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Ambassador met Assistant Minister for Petroleum Affairs Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman January 4 at the Prince's request. Prince Abdulaziz gave Ambassador a copy of the report of the International Energy Forum (IEF) Expert Group (ref A), the work of which was noted in the Leaders Statement of the G-20 Pittsburgh summit. The Prince said he was focused on the upcoming January 10 IEF High Level Steering Group (HLSG) meeting in Paris that we understand USG reps also plan to attend. Prince Abdulaziz said he hoped for a successful meeting there, and he requested Embassy assistance to work with EEB and DOE to ensure he would not be "blindsided" by U.S. or other views put forward at the HLSG meeting.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Additionally, Prince Abdulaziz requested U.S. support for IEF reform which in his view boils down to regularizing funding mechanisms and establishing clearer membership guidelines. The Prince said he concurs with the Expert Group recommendation to establish a new minimum legal framework for the IEF, but he signaled repeatedly to the Ambassador that he looks forward to working with the USG to find a solution acceptable to the United States and Saudi Arabia to preserve the informal nature of IEF deliberations.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Comment: As of DOE DepSec Poneman's December 6-8 visit to Saudi Arabia, and from what we have heard of subsequent discussions in Washington on this issue, we understand the USG position remains not to support the Expert Group recommendation to establish a minimum legal framework for the IEF but that we could accept reforms that result in regularizing funding streams and establishing clearer membership guidelines for the IEF. Both of these steps would increase the organization's effectiveness. We have heard Washington officials say they also conceivably could support the U.S. taking a more active role in the IEF, perhaps joining the organization's executive board. As we have reported previously, with the IEF secretariat headquarters located in Riyadh, U.S. Mission Saudi Arabia is aware of some of the organization's historical weaknesses, but we also see opportunities to help reshape the IEF into an organization

that much more strongly supports U.S. energy policy goals and promotes President Obama's outreach efforts to the Muslim World. The result would be an organization that is much more valuable to the United States than it has been in previous years.

15. (SBU) Action request: Embassy requests Department guidance as soon as possible about the U.S. position on the expert group report and that we can share with Prince Abdulaziz and ideally the IEF Secretary General prior to the January 10 HLSC meeting.
SMITH